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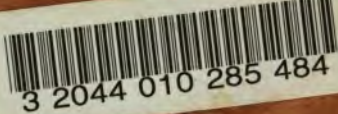
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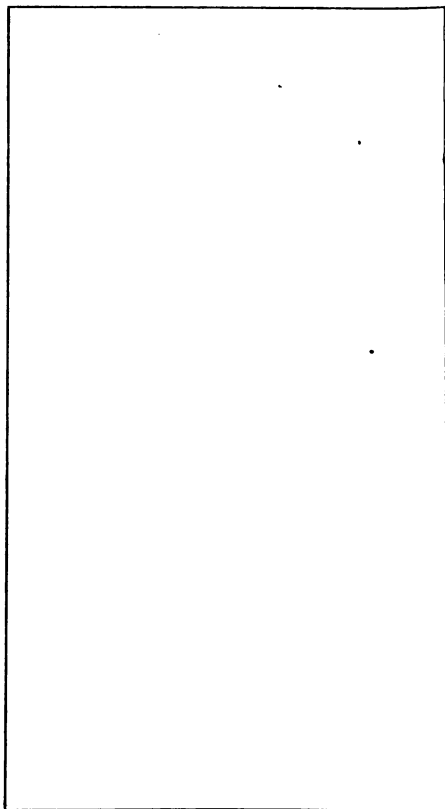


**FROM THE ESTATE OF
LAWRENCE BOND**

CLASS OF 1877



**THREE LEGENDS OF
THE CHRIST CHILD**



**THREE LEGENDS OF
THE CHRIST CHILD
BY FIONA MACLEOD**



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in course work

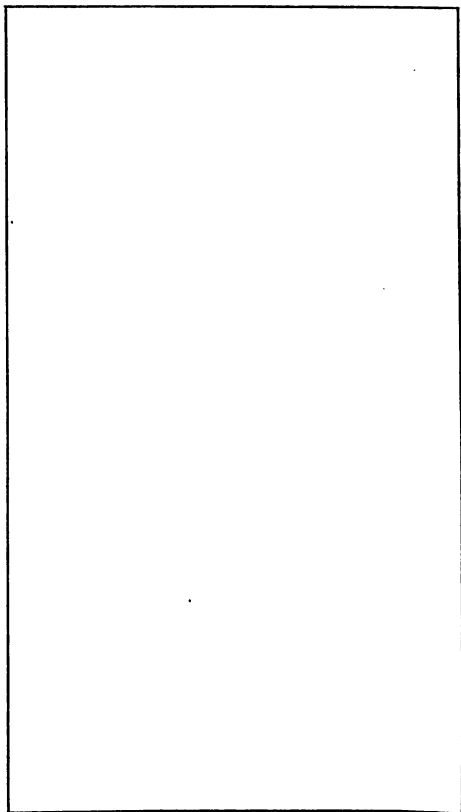
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FOREWORD

T is true that there are those who, wakeful, live out their days in this world of sight and sound, and die and are hidden away forever; and there are those who, escaping the various vicissitudes of life, dwell perpetually upon the Hills of Dream. These latter do not die. And of one such I am writing,—of one who has conjured forth from the mysterious regions of imagina-

VIII	FOREWORD
	<p><i>tion, wondrous beauties of thought and expression; such vague, half-lost, wholly indefinable melodies of the soul; of one who has plucked, for our delighting, a beautiful and fragrant bouquet of poesy from those immortal dream-fields, and given them to us as a perpetual love-offering,—of Fiona Macleod I would speak my little word of praise and admiration.</i></p> <p><i>To that elect few who journey through this world of ours, finding the best in books as in everything else, I hardly need to address myself in this brief Foreword, for they already know those lovely songs and memories, those deathless echoes From the</i></p>

Hills of Dream, and to them these lovely Legends of the little lad of Nazareth, written in all the fulness of charm for which Fiona Macleod is well known, will be but one more golden thread to weave into the web of pleasure, and they will find in them all the delicate imagery, all the lilt of birds and dream-tunes whispered through the scarcely moving leaves at twilight, which are breathed into the simple, tender, perfect pages contained in everything she ever wrote, whether of poetry or prose.

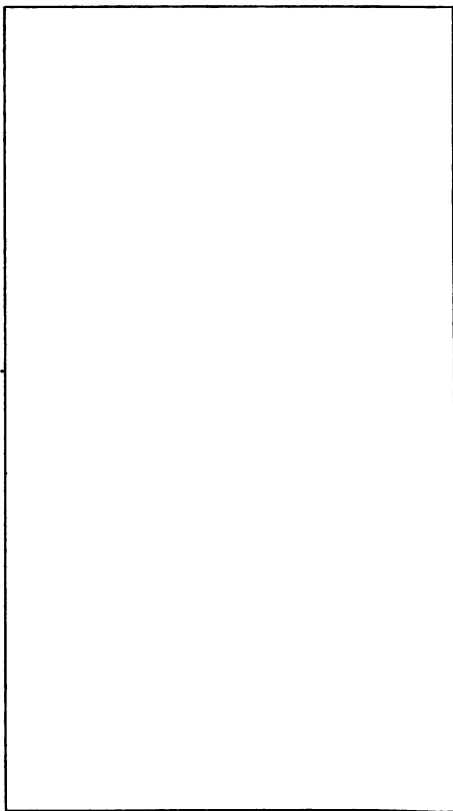
There will be those who take up this little volume asking "And who is this stranger, Fiona Macleod?" I believe

X	FOREWORD
	<p><i>if they read these pages they will search for other evidences of this ideal beauty, for such Legends cannot but stimulate the thirst for more of the mystic, golden wine of poesy, for what are they indeed if not the most delicate poetry set forth in perfect prose language !</i></p> <p><i>If, as our author says, "It is a common tongue we speak," then shall all find the meaning hidden away in these three simple Legends of the little Child Jesus, and with Mary, treasure them in their hearts. "The wave has its own whisper, the wind its own sigh," which shall whisper to our dull ears and bid us learn of love and beauty. Herein we</i></p>

shall learn why the crow is made black, and why the dove is as the white cloud of peace, and with Mary, we shall dream that we "may know Death at last," for he that knoweth Life and desireth not Death hath never lived and loved!

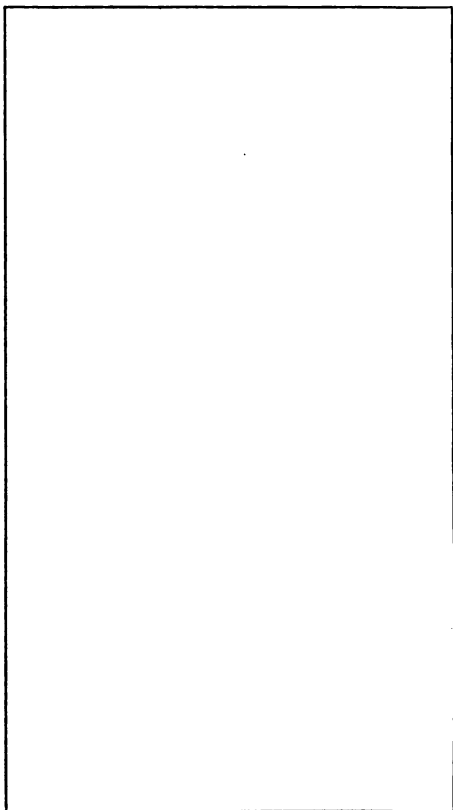
So, "dwelling among shadows and glories, in the west of passing things," we shall wait through all the dreams for the "coming of joy through the gates of Life," transfigured by Love's final sunset, when the day is past and the twilight hour has gathered us in and clothed us with the silver radiance of dreams come true!

ANNA M. BATCHELDER.



I

**THE CHILDREN OF WIND
AND THE CLAN OF PEACE**





I

THE CHILDREN OF WIND AND THE CLAN OF PEACE

I WILL tell this Legend as simply but also with what beauty I can, because the words of the old Highland woman, who told it to me, which I recall only as the, fluctuating remembrance from a dream and so must translate from the terms of dream into the terms of prose, though simple were beautiful with ancient idiom.

We must go back near twenty hundred years. It was in the last month of the last year of the seven years' silence and peace. When would that be, you ask? Surely what other would it be than the seven holy years when Jesus the Christ was a little lad. Do you not remember the lore of the elders? . . . that in the first seven years of the life of the young Christ there was peace in the world, and that the souls of men were like souls in a dream, and that the hearts of women were at rest. In the second seven years it is said that the world was like an adder that sloughs its skin: for there was every-

where a troubled sense of new things to come. So wide and far and deep was this, that men in remote lands began moving across swamps and hills and deserts; that the wild beasts shifted their lairs and moaned and cried in new forests and upon untrodden plains; that the storks and swallows in their migration wearied their wings in high, cold, untravelled ways; that the narwhals and great creatures of the deep foamed through unknown seas; that the grasses of the world wandered and inhabited hills; that many waters murmured in the wilderness and that many waters mysteriously sank from pools and

wellsprings. In the third seven years, men even on the last ocean-girdled shores were filled with further longing, and it is said that new stars were flung into the skies and ancient stars were whirled away, like dust and small stones beneath the wheels of a chariot. It was at the end of the third seven years that a Face looked out of Heaven, and that from the edges of the world men heard a confused and dreadful sound rising from the Abyss. Though the great and the small are the same, it is the great that withdraws from remembrance and the small that remains, and that may be why men have grown

old with time, and have forgotten, and remember only the little things of the common life: as that in these years the Herring became the king of all fishes, because his swift gleaming clan carried the rumour of great tidings to the uttermost places of ocean; as that in these years the little fly became king over lions and panthers and eagles and over all birds and beasts, because it alone of all created things had remained tameless and fearless; as that in these years the wild bees were called the clan of wisdom, because they carried the Word to every flower that grows and spread the rumour on all the winds of

the world ; as that in these years the Cuckoo was called the Herald of God, because in his voice are heard the bells of Resurrection.

But, as I was saying, it was in the last month of the last year of the seven years' silence and peace: the seventh year in the mortal life of Jesus the Christ. It was on the twenty-fifth day of that month, the day of His holy birth.

It was a still day. The little white flowers that were called Breaths of Hope and that we now call Stars of Bethlehem were so hushed in quiet that the shadows of moths lay on them like the dark motionless violet in the

hearts of pansies. In the long swards of tender grass the multitude of the daisies were white as milk faintly stained with flusht dews fallen from roses. On the meadows of white poppies were long shadows blue as the blue lagoons of the sky among drifting snow-white moors of cloud. Three white aspens on the pastures were in a still sleep: their tremulous leaves made no rustle, though there was a soundless wavering fall of little dusky shadows, as in the dark water of a pool where birches lean in the yellow hour of the frostfire. Upon the pastures were ewes and lambs sleeping, and yearling kids opened and closed

their onyx eyes among the garths of white clover.

It was the Sabbath, and Jesus walked alone. When He came to a little rise in the grass He turned and looked back at the house where His parents dwelled. Joseph sat on a bench, with bent shoulders, and was dreaming with fixt gaze into the west, as seamen stare across the interminable wave at the pale green horizons that are like the grassy shores of home. Mary was standing, dressed in long white raiment, white as a lily, with her right hand shading her eyes as she looked to the east, dreaming her dream.

The young Christ sighed,

but with the love of all love in His heart. "So shall it be till the day of days," He said aloud; "even so shall the hearts of men dwell among shadows and glories, in the West of passing things: even so shall that which is immortal turn to the East and watch for the coming of Joy through the Gates of Life."

At the sound of His voice He heard a sudden noise as of many birds, and turned and looked beyond the low upland where He stood. A pool of pure water lay in the hollow, fed by a ceaseless wellspring, and round it and over it circled birds whose breasts were grey as pearl and whose necks shone pur-

ple and grass-green and rose. The noise was of their wings, for though the birds were beautiful they were voiceless and dumb as flowers.

At the edge of the pool stood two figures, whom He knew to be of the angelic world because of their beauty, but who had on them the illusion of mortality so that the child did not know them. But He saw that one was beautiful as Night, and one beautiful as Morning.

He drew near.

"I have lived seven years," He said, "and I wish to send peace to the far ends of the world."

"Tell your secret to the birds," said one.

"Tell your secret to the birds," said the other.

So Jesus called to the birds.

"Come," He cried; and they came.

Seven came flying from the left, from the side of the angel beautiful as Night. Seven came flying from the right, from the side of the angel beautiful as Morning.

To the first He said: "Look into my heart."

But they wheeled about Him, and with new-found voices mocked, crying, "How could we see into your heart that is hidden" . . . and mocked and derided, crying, "What is Peace! . . . Leave us alone! Leave us alone!"

So Christ said to them:

"I know you for the birds of Ahriman, who is not beautiful but is Evil. Henceforth ye shall be black as night, and be children of the winds."

To the seven other birds which circled about Him, voiceless, and brushing their wings against His arms, He cried :

"Look into my heart."

And they swerved and hung before Him in a maze of wings, and looked into His pure heart : and, as they looked, a soft murmurous sound came from them, drowsy-sweet, full of peace : and as they hung there like a breath in frost they became white as snow.

"Ye are the Doves of the

Spirit," said Christ, "and to you I will commit that which ye have seen. Henceforth shall your plumage be white and your voices be the voices of peace."

The young Christ turned, for He heard Mary calling to the sheep and goats, and knew that dayset was come and that in the valleys the gloaming was already rising like smoke from the urns of the twilight. When He looked back He saw by the pool neither the Son of Joy nor the Son of Sorrow, but seven white doves were in the cedar beyond the pool, cooing in low ecstasy of peace and awaiting through sleep and dreams the rose-red path-

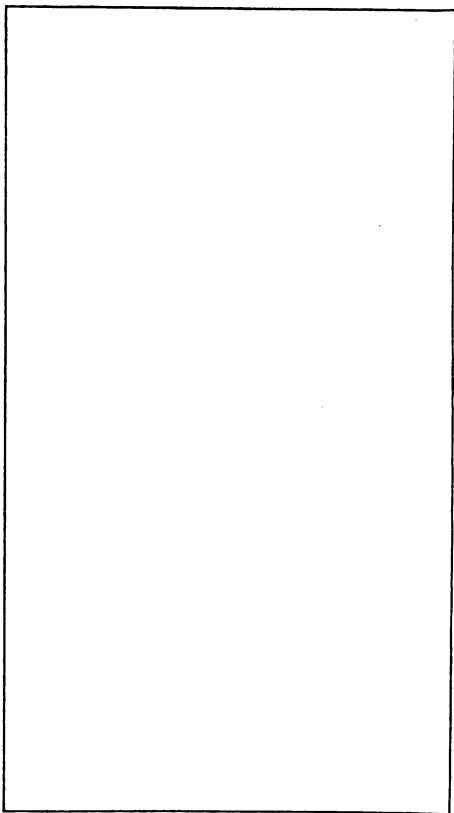
ways of the dawn. Down the long grey reaches of the ebbing day He saw seven birds rising and falling on the wind, black as black water in caves, black as the darkness of night in old pathless woods.

And that is how the first doves became white, and how the first crows became black and were called by a name that means the clan of darkness, the children of the wind.



II

THE LORDS OF WISDOM





II

THE LORDS OF WISDOM

RECALL from childhood a memory, though I cannot say now how much is old thought drowned in dreams, or how much is due to the ceaseless teller of tales who croons behind the heart and whispers the old enchantment in the twilights of the mind :

One day when the young Christ was nine years old he saw Mary walking by a

thicket. He ran and hid in the thicket, and sent three wishes of love to her, and gave to each the beat of two wings and the pulse of song. The first rose on the wings of blue and sank into the sky, carrying a prayer of Mary. The second rose on white wings and fled seawards by the hills of the west, carrying a hope of Mary. The third rose on wings of green, and sank in the grasses, carrying a dream of Mary.

Then a voice came from the thicket: a voice so sweet as to send the birds to the branches; . . . *chuireadh e na h'eoin 'an crannaibh:*

“The Yellow Star, O Mary, to the bird of the blue wing! . . .

**The Rainbow, O Mary, to the
white bird! . . .**

**The wild bee, O Mary, to the green
bird! . . ."**

At that Mary worshipped.

**"O God in the thicket,"
she said, "sweet the songs
and great the beauty. But
lo! the birds are gone."**

**Then Christ came out of
the thicket and took her
hand.**

**"Mother," said the child,
"no trouble to your heart,
dear, because of the Yellow
Star. Your prayer was that
my Father should not forget
His secret promise. The sun
is steadfast, and so I say that
the Yellow Star is set upon
your prayer. And no trouble
to your heart, Mother, be-**

cause of the Rainbow to the white bird: for your hope was for the gates of the west and the hidden gardens of Peace: and even now the gates are open, and spices and balms are on the green wave that flows the long way east of the sun and west of the moon. But as to the wild bee, Mother, of that I cannot speak."

At that Mary was sad, for she knew that when a Druid of the East had told her to give her son the friendships of the wind, of the blown dust, of the grass, of the leaf, of the wild bee, she had done all these things but the last. So she stood and wept. .

Then the young Christ,

her son, called to a bee that was among the foam-white pastures.

"What was your dream, Mother?" he said.

"My dream," said Mary, "was that I should know death at last, for in the flesh I am a woman, and that of me that is mortal desireth death."

So Christ asked the wild bee. But the bee said: "Can you see the nine hundred and ninety-nine secret roads of the air?"

"No," said the child.

"It is on one of these roads," said the wild bee, "that Mary's dream went."

So when Mary, sad at heart, but in this thing only,

went back to the house where she dwelt and made ready the supper for that day's end, Christ gave friendship to the wild bee, and became a bee, and floated above the pastures. And when he came home at twilight he knew all the secrets of the little people of the air.

That night, after the meal was done, he stood looking at Mary and Joseph.

"I have known many wisdoms," he said, "but no wisdom like the wisdom of the wild bee. I have whispered to them a secret thing, and through the years and ages they will not forget. And some of the children of men shall hear the wild bees,

and many shall call upon them ; and to that little clan of the unwise and foolish, as they shall ever be accounted, I will send the wild bees of wisdom and of truth."

And Joseph said, "Are the bees then so wise?"

But Mary whispered, "I do not think it is of the wild bees of the pasture that the Christ my son speaks, but of the wild bees of the spirit."

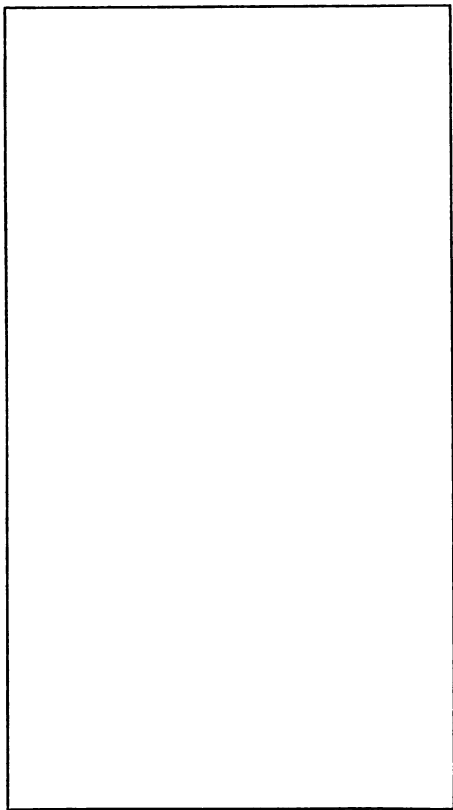
Christ slept, and put his hand in Mary's, and she had no fear: and that of her which was of heaven deepened in joy, and that of her which was mortal had peace. But Joseph lay awake, and wondered why to a little clan of those held foolish and un-

wise should come as secret wings in the dark, the sound and breath of an ancient wisdom.



III

HOW DEEP KNOWLEDGE CAME TO THE CHILD JESUS





III

HOW DEEP KNOWLEDGE CAME TO THE CHILD JESUS

EVERYWHERE we see the life of Man in subservient union with the life of Nature ; never, in a word, as a sun beset by tributary stars, but as one planet among the innumerable concourse of the sky, nurtured, it may be, by light from other luminaries and other spheres than we know of. That we are intimately at one with Nature is a cos-

mic truth we are all slowly approaching.

It is not only the dog, it is not only the wild beast and the wood-dove, that are our close kindred, but the green tree and the green grass, the blue wave and the flowing wind, the flower of a day and the granite peak of an æon.

We are woven in one loom, and the Weaver thrids our being with the sweet influences, not only of the Pleiades, but of the living world of which each is no more than a multi-coloured thread : as, in turn, He thrids the wandering wind with the inarticulate cry, the yearning, the passion, the pain of that bitter clan, the Human.

Truly we are all one. It is a common tongue we speak, though the wave has its own whisper, and the wind its own sigh, and the lip of man its word and the heart of woman its silence.

LEGEND

Long, long ago a desert king, old and blind, but dowered with ancestral wisdom beyond all men that have lived, heard that the Son of God was born among men. He rose from his place, and on the eve of the third day he came to where Jesus sat among the gifts brought by the wise men of the East. The little lad sat in Mary's lap, beneath a tree filled with

quiet light; and while the folk of Bethlehem came and went He was only a child as other children are. But when the desert king drew near, the child's eyes deepened with knowledge.

"What is it, my little son?" said Mary the Virgin.

"Sure, Mother dear," said Jesus, who had never yet spoken a word, "it is Deep Knowledge that is coming to me."

"And what will that be, O my Wonder and Glory?"

"That which will come in at the door before you speak to me again."

Even as the child spoke, an old blind man entered and bowed his head.

"Come near, O tired old man," said Mary that had borne a son to Joseph, but whose womb knew him not.

With that the tears fell into the old man's beard.

"Sorrow of sorrows," he said, "but that will be the voice of the Queen of Heaven!"

But Jesus said to his mother, "Take up the tears and throw them into the dark night." And Mary did so: and lo! upon the wilderness, where no light was, and on the dark wave, where seamen toil without hope, clusters of stars rayed downwards in a white peace.

Thereupon the old king of the desert said :

“Heal me, O King of the Elements.”

And Jesus healed him. His sight was upon him again, and his grey ancientness was green youth once more.

“I have come with Deep Knowledge,” he said.

“Ay, sure, I am for knowing that,” said the King of the Elements, that was a little child.

“Well, if you will be knowing that, you can tell me who is at my right side?”

“It is my elder brother, the Wind.”

“And what colour will the Wind be?”

“Now blue as Hope, now green as Compassion.”

“And who is on my left?”

“The Shadow of Life.”

“And what colour will the Shadow be?”

“That which is woven out of the bowels of the earth and out of the belly of the sea.”

“Truly, thou art the King of the Elements. I am bringing you a great gift, I am : I have come with Deep Knowledge.” And with that the old blind man, whose eyes were now as stars, and whose youth was a green garland about him, chanted nine runes.

The first rune was the Rune of the Four Winds.

The second rune was the Rune of the Deep Seas.

The third rune was the Rune of the Lochs and Riv-

ers and Rains and Dews and the many waters.

The fourth rune was the Rune of the Green Trees and of all things that grow.

The fifth rune was the Rune of Man and Bird and Beast, and of everything that lives and moves, in the air, on the earth, and in the sea : all that is seen of man, and all that is unseen of man.

The sixth rune was the Rune of Birth, from the spawn on the wave to the Passion of Woman.

The seventh rune was the Rune of Death, from the quenching of a gnat to the fading of the stars.

The eighth rune was the Rune of the Soul that dieth

not, and the Spirit that is.

The ninth rune was the Rune of the Mud and the Dross and the Slime of Evil—that is the Garden of God wherein He walks with sunlight streaming from the palms of his hands and with stars springing beneath his feet.

Then when he had done the old man said :

“ I have brought you Deep Knowledge.” But at that Jesus the child said :

“ All this I heard on my way hither.”

The old desert king bowed his head. Then he took a blade of grass and played upon it. It was a strange wild air that he played.

"Iosa Mac Dhè, tell the woman what song *that* is," cried the desert king.

"It is the speech of the Wind that is my Brother," cried the Child, clapping his hands for joy.

"And what will this be?" And the old man took a green leaf, and played a lovely whispering song. "It is the speech of the leaves," cried Jesus the little lad, laughing low.

And thereafter the desert king played upon a handful of dust, and upon a drop of water, and upon a flame of fire; and the Child laughed for the knowing and the joy. Then he gave the secret speech of the singing bird,

and the barking fox, and the howling wolf, and the bleating sheep : of all and every created kind.

“ O King of the Elements,” he said then, “ for sure you know much ; but now I have made you to know the secret things of the green Earth that is Mother of you and of Mary too.”

But while Jesus pondered that one mystery, the old man was gone : and when he got to his people, they put him alive into a hollow of the earth and covered him up, because of his shining eyes, and the green youth that was about him as a garland.

And when Christ was nailed upon the Cross, Deep

Knowledge went back into the green world, and passed into the grass and the sap in trees, and the flowing wind, and the dust that swirls and is gone.

* * * *

All this is of the wisdom of the long ago, and you and I are of those who know how ancient it is, how remoter far than when Mary, at the bidding of her little son, threw up into the firmament the tears of an old man.

It is old, old —

“Thousands of years, thousands
of years,
If all were told.”

Is it wholly unwise, wholly
the fantasy of a dreamer to

insist, in this late day, when the dust of ages and the mists of the present hide from us the Beauty of the World, that we can regain our birthright only by leaving our cloud-palaces of the brain, and becoming one with the cosmic life of which, merely as men, we are no more than a perpetual phosphorescence ?





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